



Australian Bureau of Statistics

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1998 Special Article - The State of New South Wales - Timeline of History

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Aboriginal settlement

The precise date of the first human occupation of NSW is not known - estimates range from 30,000 to 60,000 years ago. The Aboriginal people are thought to have crossed to Australia from south-east Asia as far back as 120,000 years ago. Remains of a camp site found at Lake Mungo in the far west of the state have been dated as 32,000 years old. The pre-contact population in NSW may have been greater than 40,000. The Aboriginal people were hunter gatherers and, although they did not use agricultural techniques, used fire as a form of land management to promote new vegetation. The Aborigines were not formed into the political structure of a nation but were separate groups, each with their own language and traditions. Each language group or clan was responsible for the management of certain areas of land. Groups had contact with each other for trade, initiations, marriages and other ceremonies. Some groups formed political alliances while others were at war.

1770: Captain Cook

During 1770, Captain James Cook charted the east coast of Australia, landing at Botany Bay on 28 April. Cook formally took possession of the whole of the eastern part of Australia in August on Possession Island, just off the north coast of Cape York Peninsula, naming the region "New South Wales".

1788: European settlement

Captain Arthur Phillip, commanding the First Fleet, sailed into Botany Bay on 18 January 1788. The fleet then moved to Sydney Cove where the British flag was raised on 26 January. 1,035 persons disembarked, of whom 850 were convicts. . The colony was formally proclaimed on 7 February. The First Fleet's objective was to set up a penal colony to replace those lost in the American war of Independence. Subsequent fleets arrived in 1790 and 1791. The first free settlers arrived in 1793 on the **Bellona**.

1790s: Coal discovered

During the 1790s coal was discovered in the Hunter and Illawarra regions and the first merino sheep were imported into NSW. Tasmania was found to be an island by George Bass

1807: First wool exported

Port Phillip Bay was explored by Lieutenant Murray. Matthew Flinders, who circumnavigated Australia in 1802-03, recommended the name Australia be used rather than New Holland. The first export of wool was in 1807 when Captain Macarthur sent 245 pounds of wool to England.

1809: Macquarie arrives

In 1808, Lieutenant Colonel Johnston and Macarthur overthrew Governor Bligh in the 'Rum Rebellion'. Both were court martialled in London in 1809 for this act and Lachlan Macquarie assumed the position of Governor. Macquarie's period was one of civic stability, establishment of new settlements and the erection of public buildings. With his convict architect Francis Greenway, Macquarie built structures, some of which can be seen today in Macquarie Street in Sydney. Among the buildings erected were the first Post Office (1810), Sydney Hospital (1816) and Hyde Park Barracks (1817).

1813: Crossing of Blue Mountains

In 1812 the Governor's Court and the Supreme Court were established. In 1813 Blaxland, Lawson and Wentworth crossed the Blue Mountains which had been a barrier to inland exploration and settlement. A road over the mountains was built by 1815. The first bank - the Bank of New South Wales (subsequently Westpac Banking Corporation) - opened in 1817. Macquarie returned to England in 1821.

1823: Legislative Council appointed

In 1823, a Legislative Council of five leading citizens was appointed to advise the Governor. In 1824, NSW was proclaimed a crown colony; the first act of Parliament, the Currency Act, was passed; and the Supreme Court of Criminal Jurisdiction was established. In 1825 Tasmania became a separate colony. In 1828, the Legislative Council, appointed by the Governor, was expanded to 15 and the first full census of NSW, known as the muster, was held. There were 36,598 non-Aboriginal persons; Aborigines were not officially counted until 1971. The Imperial Act was passed which made all the laws and statutes in force in England applicable to NSW.

1831: First steamship arrives

In 1831 the first steamer Sophia Jane arrived in Sydney and the "Sydney Herald" was first published. The paper became "The Sydney Morning Herald" in 1842. Assisted passage began in 1832. South Australia became a separate colony in 1836.

1838: Myall Creek massacre

The Myall Creek massacre was the first case in which Europeans were tried and punished for the murder of Aborigines. Twenty-eight men, women and children were murdered. Eleven white men were brought to trial and acquitted. A second trial found seven of them guilty and they were hanged.

1843: First elections

The Sydney Municipal Corporation was established in 1842. In 1843 the first 24 elected representatives of the Legislative Council took their place in a chamber of 36, the rest being appointed by the Governor. The transportation of convicts to NSW ceased after a long campaign by the settlers of NSW. In 1848, the "Marion" was the last ship to transport convicts to NSW.

1851: Gold rush

Edward Hargreaves found payable gold near Bathurst in February 1851. Over the next decade the population increased at a rate never attained again. By August that year there were over 10,000 people on NSW diggings. Gold was declared Crown property and Victoria became an independent colony. In 1852, revenue from gold was allocated to the Colonial Legislatures and the University of Sydney was formally opened.

1855: Responsible government

In 1855 the British Government approved a draft Constitution and NSW was granted responsible government. The first railway opened between Sydney and Parramatta. 1856 was the first year of elective Parliament and responsible Ministry. The first Intercolonial cricket match between Victoria and NSW was played. the population had grown to 252,649

1858: Secret ballot

The Parliament granted universal male suffrage and the secret ballot in 1858. Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide were connected by telegraph. Queensland became a separate colony in 1859, reducing the area of NSW.

1862: State aid to religion abolished

State aid to religion was abolished in 1862 and the railway was opened to Penrith. The western border of Queensland was moved to the 138th meridian of east longitude - its position today. In the following year the Northern Territory was separated and annexed to South Australia. In 1868 an Irishman, O'Farrell, attempted to assassinate the Duke of Edinburgh. He was subsequently hanged. The Sydney Trades and Labour Council was formed in 1871. The telegraphic cable to England was completed in 1872 and a telegraphic cable joining NSW and New Zealand was laid in 1876. In 1878, the discovery of artesian water near Bourke allowed settlement away from river fronts.

1879: Royal National Park

The first steam tramway started operations in Sydney, and the Royal National Park, Australia's first national park and the world's second, was created in 1879. In the same year the first Intercolonial Trade Union congress was held in Sydney and the first consignment of frozen meat was shipped to England aboard the "Strathleven".

1883: Silver discovered

In 1880 aid was abolished to denominational schools and it was decreed that all State schools must be sectarian. The first telephones were installed in Sydney in that year and women were admitted to Sydney University the following year. The Trade Unions Act gave workers the right to form unions in 1881. In 1882 the first cricket test in NSW was played between Australia and England. In 1883 silver was found at Broken Hill and BHP was incorporated two years later. A railway bridge was built across the Murray thereby linking Sydney and Melbourne by rail. The NSW Aborigines Protection Board was established. 1886 saw an industrial depression and there was large scale unemployment by 1887.

1888: Centenary of NSW

Centenary celebrations were held in 1888 to commemorate the arrival of the First Fleet. Centennial Park in Sydney was given to the people of NSW as a gift from the Government. A weekly mail service to England began and the railways of NSW and Queensland were joined. Sir Henry Parkes, the Premier, committed NSW to federation and in October of 1889 gave the famous Tenterfield oration urging a national parliament elected by the people rather than a council of colonies. The great strike of 1890 saw miners, waterside workers, draymen and shearers defeated but in the next year 35 Labour member were returned to the Legislation Council.

1893: One man one vote

By 1893 the financial crisis deepened and 13 of the 25 trading banks closed their doors. A new Electoral Act was passed giving one man one vote. In the same year the Country Party was formed. Income tax began in 1895 and the police were enfranchised in 1896.

1898: First wheat exported

In 1898 the first surplus of wheat was exported and a referendum on the Federation Constitution Bill was defeated. A second referendum was passed in 1899 and the colonies agreed to federate. Queen Victoria gave assent to the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Bill on 9 July 1900.

1901: Federation

On 1 January 1901, the Commonwealth of Australia was proclaimed by the Governor-General, Lord Hopetoun, at Centennial Park in Sydney. The first federal elections were held in March and Parliament was opened by the Duke of York and Cornwall (later King George V) in May. Edmund Barton became the first Prime Minister. The Commonwealth became responsible for Defence, Post and Telecommunications, and Customs and Excise. Interstate free trade was established and old age pensions were introduced in NSW.

1902: Vote for women

In 1902 the vote was given to women in NSW and in 1903 the High Court of Australia was set up. Ada Emily Evans was the first woman to graduate in law from the University of Sydney in the same year, although she was not permitted to practice.

1906: Free public schools

Public school fees were abolished, Central Railway Station opened, and the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Scheme was approved. In 1907 Sydney and Melbourne were connected by telephone and Rugby League commenced in the same year breaking away from Rugby Union over a disagreement about payment to injured players.

1908: Canberra chosen as Australian capital

The Yass-Canberra district was chosen as the site of the federal capital and the Minimum Wage Act was passed. The Pacific Fleet from the USA (the Great White Fleet) visited Sydney. The Fisher Library was opened at Sydney University in 1909 and a general coal strike occurred in NSW. Amendments to the NSW Aborigines Act gave the NSW Protection Board greater power to remove children for training as domestic servants. In 1910 the first Labour Government in NSW was formed.

1911: First Australian census

In 1911 the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) was ceded to the Commonwealth by NSW. The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) was established and work commenced on the trans-continental railway. The first Commonwealth census was conducted.

1914: First World War

In 1913 the Australian fleet arrived in Sydney. It included the battle cruiser **Australia** at the cruisers **Sydney** and **Melbourne**. The first double dissolution of Federal Parliament occurred and the First World War, the Great War, started in August 1914. Enlistment of the first Australian Imperial Force (AIF) began almost immediately. The RAN was placed under British control. On

the way to Europe the cruiser **Sydney** sank the German cruiser **Emden** off the Cocos Islands. The first AIF servicemen left in November for Egypt. Jervis Bay was added to the Commonwealth in 1915. In April the Australian and New Zealand soldiers (the Anzacs) landed at Gallipoli in Turkey. The iron and steel works were opened in Newcastle by BHP.

1916: Six o'clock closing

Six o'clock closing for hotels was introduced in 1916. Workmen's compensation was extended to all workers. A federal referendum for compulsory military service was defeated that year as was the second in 1917. Daylight saving was started and abandoned that year.

1920: Compulsory school attendance

Multiple electorates and proportional representation were used in the State election in 1920. Compulsory school attendance was introduced in the same year. The 44 hour week was introduced in NSW in 1921.

1922: State bank established

In 1922 the Sydney Harbour Bridge Bill was passed as was the establishment of the Rural Bank (subsequently the State Bank of NSW). The working week reverted to 48 hours that year. The first radio station in Australia - 2SB (now 2BL) started in Sydney in 1923.

1926: Electrification of railways

The first section of the underground railway opened in Sydney and the electrification of the suburban railway lines began. The 44 hour week was reintroduced in NSW. The widows' pension and compulsory workers' compensation were instituted in NSW. A system of single seats and preferential voting was introduced for State elections.

1929: Compulsory voting

Compulsory voting was introduced for State elections in 1929 and a Royal Commission on the coal industry commenced following the death of a miner at Rothbury in a clash between unionists and the police. The State Lottery started in 1931.

1932: Government dismissed

The Sydney Harbour Bridge was opened in 1932. The Governor, Sir Philip Game, dismissed the NSW Premier, J. T. Lang, that year and the NSW Industrial Court was constituted. Sydney and Brisbane were connected by a standard gauge rail link on the completion of the Clarence River Bridge. In 1935 the Commonwealth Court's basic wage was adopted for State awards and the Cooperative Home Building Societies were sponsored by the State Government.

1939: The Second World War

The Second World War broke out in 1939 and military conscription for home defence was introduced. Sliced bread was introduced in Sydney. The Commonwealth Arbitration Court adopted 44 hours as the standard week.

1942: Uniform income tax

In 1942 Singapore fell and 15,000 Australian troops were taken prisoner. Darwin was bombed and three Japanese midget submarines entered Sydney Harbour sinking the barracks ship Kuttabul. The Commonwealth Uniform Income Tax replaced State income and entertainment

taxes. The Commonwealth introduced the widows' pension.

1945: War ends

The war ended in 1945 and Australia was an original signatory to the United Nations Charter. Non-Labor party factions united and formed the Liberal Party of Australia. The NSW Liberal Executive was appointed in 1945. In 1946, the Commonwealth assumed responsibility for social services after a referendum

1947: 40 hour week

The 40 hour week was introduced in NSW in 1947 and voting became compulsory in local government elections. In 1948, after a referendum was rejected, the States assumed control of rents, prices and land sales. The first Holden car rolled off the assembly line and Don Bradman retired from cricket with a test average of 99.94.

1949: Snowy Mountains Scheme

There was a general strike in the coal fields in 1949 and gas and electricity were rationed. The strike was broken when troops were brought in to operate the mines. The second university, the NSW University of Technology - now the University of NSW - was incorporated by the State Government and the Snowy Mountains Irrigation scheme commenced.

1954: First visit by monarch

In 1954 Elizabeth II became the first reigning monarch to visit Australia. Following a referendum in 1955, ten o'clock closing for hotels was introduced in NSW. The first power was generated by the Snowy Mountains Scheme and the death penalty was abolished in NSW.

1956: TV starts

Television commenced broadcasting in 1956 and land tax was reintroduced in NSW. The Commonwealth conciliation and arbitration system was reorganised establishing a court to handle legal decisions and a commission to settle disputes and determine awards. In 1957 Joern Utzon won a world-wide competition to design the Sydney Opera House.

1961: Divorce law

In 1961 a referendum to abolish the Legislative Council was defeated and a uniform divorce law for Australia came into operation. A standard gauge railway connecting Sydney and Melbourne opened in 1962 as did the Cahill Expressway, Sydney's first freeway. Aborigines were given the right to vote in Commonwealth elections.

1964: TAB established

The Totalizator Agency Board (TAB) was established to allow off-course betting on racing. Dawn Fraser of Balmain won the 100 metre freestyle gold medal at the Tokyo Olympic Games. It was her third Olympic gold medal in this event.

1966: Decimal currency

Provisional driving licences were introduced in NSW in 1966 and legislation was passed to allow the screening of films on Sundays. Married women were allowed to remain working in the Commonwealth Public Service. Decimal currency was introduced.

1971: Legal age eighteen

In 1971 the State Government lowered the minimum age of legal responsibility from 21 to 18. The control of payroll tax was transferred to the States from the Commonwealth. Daylight saving was introduced and the census included Aborigines for the first time. In 1973 the voting age for Federal elections was reduced to 18; tertiary education fees were abolished and the Sydney Opera House was opened.

1975: Order of Australia

The first NSW Ombudsman was appointed in 1975 and the Arbitration Commission introduced wage indexation based on the quarterly CPI. The Order of Australia was awarded for the first time.

1979: 37½ hour week

State workers were granted a 37½ hour week in 1979 and the Eastern Suburbs railway commenced operation - over 100 years after it was first mooted.

1981: Sir Roden Cutler retires

Public funding of State parliamentary elections was introduced in 1981 and the Arbitration Commission abandoned wage indexation. Sir Roden Cutler, the longest serving Governor in NSW history, retired.

1984: Four year term

The Legislative Assembly was elected for a maximum term of four years. Advance Australia Fair became the official National Anthem and green and gold were proclaimed as Australia's national colours. Homosexuality was decriminalised.

1986: Australia Acts

In 1986 the proclamation of the Australia Acts ended the powers of the British Parliament and judicial system over the States. The number of members of the Legislative Assembly was increased from 99 to 109. Neville Wran resigned as State Premier after ten years --- the longest serving Premier in the State's history.

1988: Bicentenary

1988 saw Australia celebrate its bicentenary of European settlement. The monorail started in Sydney amid great controversy. In 1989, the NSW Government formed the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) and passed the Freedom of Information Bill. In the latter part of the year Newcastle was devastated by an earthquake claiming 12 lives.

1990: Gulf war

In 1990 Australia supported the United Nations trade sanctions against Iraq. In early 1990 an estimated one-third of the State was flooded in a two week period. The National Maritime Museum at Darling Harbour was opened.

1991: Adoption Information Act

Pemulwuy Koori College, the first Aboriginal high school, opened in February. In March the number of members of the Legislative Assembly was changed back from 109 to 99. The

Adoption Information Act came into effect in April. The legislation provided access to records for adopted children and their parents. The State election in May 1991 saw the Greiner Government returned to power with the support of four independents. On 23 October 1991 the first general strike since 1929 was held to protest against Industrial Relations legislation introduced by the NSW Government. Also in that year the Museum of Contemporary Art was opened at Circular Quay. Eight people were killed by a gunman in a suburban shopping complex in Strathfield, Sydney. Laws were introduced later in the year to curb access to military assault rifles.

1992: Premier resigns

In March the first woman Chief Judge, Mahla Pearlman, was appointed to the Land and Environment Court of NSW. Premier Greiner resigned in June following an Independent Commission Against Corruption inquiry into the appointment of a member of Parliament to a public service position. John Fahey was selected as his replacement. The Government Insurance Office (GIO) was floated in July. The Sydney Harbour Tunnel was opened in August. In December, the first women were ordained in the Anglican Church in NSW.

1993: Olympic bid succeeds

In March it became legal to sell and serve kangaroo meat in NSW for human consumption. In September the bid to hold the year 2000 Olympics in Sydney was successful. In November police were dealing with the largest serial killing on record in NSW, known as the backpacker murders, following the discovery of a seventh body in forests near Sydney. During the same month NSW became the first state to pass legislation banning vilification of homosexuals.

1994: Bush fires

During January fire storms ravaged NSW. In ten days 600,000 hectares of bush were burnt out, 185 homes destroyed, four lives lost and over 12,000 people went through evacuation centres. In November a third runway for Sydney's Kingsford-Smith Airport was opened and the State Bank of NSW was sold. The drought in NSW continued to worsen with 98% of the State drought-declared by December. A Royal Commission was established to investigate corruption in the NSW Police Service.

1995: Sydney casino

The drought continued throughout 1995. Temperatures during winter reached 30°C and rain was scarce. In April, there was a change of government from the Liberal/National Party coalition to the Australian Labor Party with Bob Carr as Premier. Sydney's first legal casino opened on 13 September at Darling Harbour. With a main span of 345 metres, the Glebe Island Bridge was opened in December.

1996: New rail links

A new rail link was opened between Merrylands and Parramatta, providing direct services between Campbelltown and Penrith. Work on a new southern rail line commenced to link City--Airport--East Hills. The logo for the Sydney 2000 Olympics was unveiled at Darling Harbour and construction of the main Olympic stadium commenced at Homebush. A number of severe storms hit parts of NSW. Both Armidale and Singleton suffered hail damage, while a flood claimed one life in Coffs Harbour. The Royal Commission into the NSW Police Service continued and Peter Ryan was sworn in as NSW Police Commissioner. As a result of a massacre at Port Arthur in Tasmania, bans on possession of semi-automatic weapons were introduced.

1997: Thredbo landslide

A landslide at Thredbo destroyed two ski lodges and buried 19 people. Miraculously, one survivor was recovered by the rescue team, which numbered more than 600. There were more than 185 bushfires burning across NSW in December and four volunteer fire fighters were killed, two at Lithgow, one at Menai and one near Wingello. The largest fire destroyed bushland in the Pilliga region, near Coonabarabran. Trams returned to Sydney after a 36 year absence, with the opening of a light rail service between Central and Wentworth Park. The permanent home of the Sydney casino, Star City, was opened.

1998: Royal Easter Show moves

In April, the Royal Easter Show was held for the first time at the new showgrounds at Homebush Bay, after moving from the traditional site at Moore Park. The Olympic Park railway opened in March with the station located adjacent to the main Olympic Stadium and the new Showground complex. A torrential downpour and flash flood in the Wollongong area caused widespread damage to homes. Two separate warnings were issued to Sydney residents to boil their water following reports of the discovery of micro-organism contamination in the water supply in August and September. The Sydney to Hobart yacht race was marred by tragedy when heavy storms struck the fleet off the NSW coast. Six sailors were lost and more than half the field withdrew from the race.

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